

FFY2024 Montana AmeriCorps State Competitive Program Grant

NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY (NOFO)

This Notice outlines the process for applying for an AmeriCorps State grant, funded by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) doing business as AmeriCorps, administered and overseen by the Montana Governor's Office of Community Service (GOCS aka ServeMontana). The level and timing of grant funding is subject to annual appropriations. GOCS reserves the right to modify any component of this Notice anytime.

Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)

This Notice is the first in a multistep process an applicant must complete to apply for and receive AmeriCorps State Competitive funding. ServeMontana's role is to solicit, screen, and rank applications. This process is only for ranking; no funding will be awarded from this solicitation. All applications cleared through screening will be ranked and submitted to compete nationally for funding. A description of the process used by AmeriCorps is contained in this Notice. This Notice should be read together with AmeriCorps Regulations, 45 CFR §2520–2550, Mandatory Supplemental Information, Application Instructions, and Performance Measure Instructions which are incorporated by reference. Applicants should review federal regulations at <https://www.ecfr.gov/> and grant management materials on [AmeriCorps' website](#).

ServeMontana

Montana's Commission on Community Service was established in 1993 to administer grants under the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993, amended by the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act of 2009 and the Montana Community Service Act of 1994 (MCA 90-14-103). Under the Montana Commission on Community Service, ServeMontana administers funds to AmeriCorps State programs; encourages citizens of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities to engage in service; involves youth in the life and work of communities; and strengthens volunteerism for all Montanans.

Expectations

ServeMontana expects all respondents to display the following features:

- ✓ Address rural, Tribal, underserved, or areas of poverty not currently served by AmeriCorps programs
- ✓ Clearly connect proposed activities to the needs and priorities in the Montana State Service Plan
- ✓ Collaborative approach to program planning, design, and delivery
- ✓ Recruit Montanans to serve in their local community
- ✓ Inclusive design and delivery, the program is accessible to individuals with disabilities

Purpose of AmeriCorps Funding

AmeriCorps improves lives, strengthens communities, fosters civic engagement, and brings people together to tackle some of the country's most pressing challenges through service and volunteering. AmeriCorps members and AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers serve with organizations dedicated to improving communities and lives of those serving. AmeriCorps demonstrates service as a cornerstone of our state and national culture.

AmeriCorps Grants are awarded to eligible organizations to engage AmeriCorps members in evidence based or informed interventions and practices to strengthen communities. An AmeriCorps member is an individual who engages in service through an approved National Service Position. Members may receive a living allowance and

other benefits while serving but are *not* employees. Upon successful completion of service, members earn a Segal AmeriCorps Education Award from the National Service Trust. Commonly referred to as the 'Ed Award', members receive a voucher that can be used to pay higher education expenses or qualified student loans, for up to seven years. Members age 55+ may be eligible to transfer their Education Award.

Who Should Apply to This Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)?

Organizations continuing a competitively funded program or who propose an AmeriCorps State program that operates only in Montana must apply to this competition. The Governor's Office of Community Service will engage a Grant Review Workgroup to review and score grants through a selection process, described in this RFP, and select applicants for recommended funding. Funding recommendations are presented to the Montana Commission on Community Service for approval. Applicants that receive funding for AmeriCorps programs through this Notice are overseen by ServeMontana in all areas of grant management.

Applying to this Notice is required for AmeriCorps programs that propose to serve only in the state of Montana. Tribes and Tribal organizations may apply through this Notice or may choose to apply directly to AmeriCorps. AmeriCorps may award a Cost Reimbursement or an Education Award Program grant to any successful applicant, but a Fixed Cost grant is limited to certain applicants ([See Application Types](#)).

If the applicant organization has never had an AmeriCorps grant or it has been more than 2 years since having an AmeriCorps grant, please consider the Montana AmeriCorps Formula grant opportunity. Organizations seeking to identify if AmeriCorps State resources are well-suited to meet identified needs should contact GOCS for a consultation.

Multi-state organizations proposing to operate AmeriCorps National programs in more than one state or territory apply directly to AmeriCorps and are required to consult State Service Commissions. [ServeMontana's National Direct Consultation page](#) details Montana's the consultation process. Failure to consult will likely result in a 'do not support' recommendation to AmeriCorps.

Montana AmeriCorps State Process and Screening

To be eligible for consideration under this Notice, an applicant must meet the intent of all the requirements listed in this packet. ServeMontana staff will determine if the applicant's proposal complies with the requirements. If responses do not meet all requirements listed in this Notice, the application may be deemed unresponsive and/or incomplete and will be removed from the review process. Applicants will be reviewed to ensure they meet the standards of responsibility in accordance with [ARM 2.5.407](#). A determination of non-responsiveness may be made anytime during the process if information surfaces that would result in the determination of non-responsibility.

Dual Points of Contact - All Applicants

From the date this Request for Proposal (RFP) is officially posted until an applicant(s) is selected and announced by GOCS, *applicants shall only communicate with designated staff listed below regarding this Notice*. Any unauthorized contact may disqualify the applicant from further consideration.

Kristina Jordan, GOCS Program Officer
Ph: 406-444-5547
Email: kristina.jordan@mt.gov

Keena Irby, GOCS Fiscal Officer
Ph: 406-444-1809
Email: keena.irby@mt.gov

Costs/Ownership of Materials

The applicant is solely responsible for all costs it incurs prior to subaward contract execution. The State shall own all materials submitted in response to this RFP.

Associated Documents

The following documents and/or forms are referenced through this Notice and are available at <https://serve.mt.gov/americorps/americorps-grants/Competitive-Program-Grant>

- FFY2024 AmeriCorps Application Instructions
- FFY2024 Mandatory Supplemental Information
- FFY2024 Performance Measure Instructions
- Letter of Intent Form
- Operational and Fiscal Management Survey (OFMS)
- Evaluation Plan Template
- Budget Worksheet
- Logic Model Worksheet

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TIMELINE

Sep. 29, 2023	Official posting of the Notice
Oct. 6, 2023	<u>All applicants: Letter of Intent & associated documents due by 5pm Mountain Time</u> (see Application and Submission Information) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Letter of Intent (LOI)• PDF of current SAM registration & UEI• Documentation of Federally Approved Indirect Cost Rate, if applicable• Confirmation of most recent Single Audit, as applicable
Oct. 16-19, 2023	Technical assistance period* Submit questions via email to serve@mt.gov .
Oct. 25, 2023	Last day to submit an Alternative Match Request
Oct. 26, 2023	<u>All applicants: Application Due Date by 5pm Mountain Time</u> (see Application and Submission Information) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Complete Application, submitted in eGrants• Additional Documents, submitted via email to serve@mt.gov• Operational and Financial Management Survey (OFMS), submitted via AmeriCorps' webform, email confirmation submitted to serve@mt.gov
Nov. 15, 2023	Competitive Grant Review Workgroup Meeting
Dec. 14, 2023	Commission Meeting
Dec. 15-21, 2023	State of Montana Applicant clarification period – All recommended applicants
Dec. 21, 2023	<u>Clarified applications resubmitted in eGrants by 5pm Mountain Time</u>
Spring 2024	AmeriCorps Clarification and Resolution
Apr. 2024	Applicants notified of funding determination
Jul. 2024	Awards issued to successful applicants

***Technical Assistance**

Applicants are encouraged to use the technical assistance period to ask clarifying questions, obtain a better understanding of the RFP process, the project, and to notify the State of any ambiguities, inconsistencies, or errors discovered upon examination of this Notice of Funding Opportunity.

Participation in the technical assistance period is optional, however, all interested parties are encouraged to participate. All questions and written responses will be posted publicly on the ServeMontana website at <https://serve.mt.gov/ameri-corps/ameri-corps-grants/Competitive-Program-Grant>.

PLANS, FOCUS AREAS, FUNDING PRIORITIES, & PERFORMANCE MEASURES

To receive priority consideration, applicants must show the priority area is a significant part of the program focus and intended outcomes, and must include a high-quality program design. Proposing a program that receives priority consideration does not guarantee funding.

Montana State Service Plan

The 2022-2024 Montana State Service Plan outlines the goals and objectives of the Governor's Office of Community Service (GOCS). Applicants should strive to implement evidence-based service strategies to meet one or more needs identified in the [State Service Plan](#).

Governor and First Lady Priorities

- [American Indian Affairs](#)- Partner with Tribal Nations and people to help create more and better opportunities. GOCS seeks to engage Tribal members into service with Montana's AmeriCorps programs and to foster programs that make real impacts in addressing the diverse needs facing Montana's Tribal Nations, with cultural competency.
- [Improve Education and Empower Montana's Workforce](#) – Provide better resources for K-12 Educators, prepare Montana students for the jobs of tomorrow, and bring our kids and grandkids home to serve in AmeriCorps.
- [Boosting Literacy](#) – Prepare Montanans of all ages to better engage in daily life through developing written communication and reading comprehension skills.
- [Promote Stewardship of Montana's Public Lands](#) – Bring Montanans together in service interventions resulting in healthier landscapes, more recreational opportunities, more jobs, less severe wildfires, and improved habitat and water quality.
- [Improve Access to Mental Health Care](#) – Increase Montana's access to mental health care, suicide prevention services, health education, and innovative community strategies.
- [Increase Opportunities for Veterans](#) – Engage veterans in overcoming barriers to employment, connect them with employment opportunities, and provide services for veterans to fulfill their hopes and dreams. GOCS seeks to engage veterans into service with Montana's AmeriCorps programs and to foster programs that make real impacts in addressing the diverse needs facing Montana's veterans and military families.

Montana Encouraged Program Elements

- Program design facilitates AmeriCorps members receiving impactful civic education and/or service-learning as part of member development that increases knowledge and deepens the members' ethic of service.
- Program design includes engaging citizens with lived experience to serve people in the area of defined need with robust training, development, and support.
- Program design engages Montanans and uniquely prepares them to serve the communities where they live.

AmeriCorps Focus Areas

[The National and Community Service Act of 1990, as amended by the Serve America Act](#), emphasizes measuring the impact of service and focusing on a core set of issue areas. To carry out Congress's intent, maximize the impact of investment in national service, and to achieve the goals laid out in AmeriCorps' [Strategic Plan \(2022-2026\)](#), AmeriCorps has the following Focus Areas:

- [Disaster Services](#) Helping individuals and communities prepare for, respond to, recover from, and mitigate the effects of disasters and increase community resiliency.
- [Economic Opportunity](#) Improving economic well-being and security of all individuals.
- [Education](#) Improving educational outcomes for all people, especially children. AmeriCorps is particularly interested in program designs that support youth engagement and service learning as strategies to achieve high educational outcomes.

- [Environmental Stewardship](#) Supporting communities to become more resilient through measures that reduce greenhouse gas emissions, conserve land and water, increase renewable energy use and improve at-risk ecosystems, especially in underserved households and communities.
- [Healthy Futures](#) Supporting for health needs within communities, including mitigating the impacts of public health crises, access to care, aging in place, [public health](#), and addressing childhood obesity, especially in underserved communities.
- [Veterans & Military Families](#) Improving quality of life of veterans, military families, caregivers, and survivors.

AmeriCorps Strategic Plan

AmeriCorps [2022-2026 Strategic Plan](#) defines goals, objectives, and strategies to meet the agency’s mission to improve lives and strengthen communities. AmeriCorps’ four goals will better prepare the agency to respond to national and local needs and help the communities it serves prosper. The goals are: partner with communities to alleviate poverty and advance racial equity, enhance the experience for AmeriCorps members, unite Americans by bringing them together in service, and to effectively steward federal resources.

AmeriCorps Funding Priorities

- Organizations addressing poverty, strengthening rural and tribal communities, and serving people with disabilities, people with arrest and/or conviction records, immigrants and refugees, people who identify as part of the LGBTQIA+ community, and religious minorities
- Evidence-based interventions on the [AmeriCorps Evidence Exchange](#) assessed as having Moderate or Strong evidence. These interventions have demonstrated effectiveness in improving outcomes for individuals living in underserved communities and the agency has committed resources to supporting grantees seeking to replicate and evaluate these interventions in similar communities
- Veterans and Military Families, Caregivers, and Survivors – a program model that improves the quality of life of veterans and improves the well-being of military and veteran families, caregivers, and survivors
- Faith-based organizations
- Programs that create workforce pathways for AmeriCorps members, including deliberate training, certifications, and hiring preferences or support
- Environmental Stewardship, including supporting communities to become more resilient through measures that reduce greenhouse gas emissions, conserve land and water, increase renewable energy use and improve at-risk ecosystems, especially in underserved households and communities
- [Community-based programs that enhance and expand services to second chance youth and/or engage those youth as AmeriCorps members](#)
- [Programs that support civic bridgebuilding programs and projects to reduce polarization and community divisions; and providing training in civic bridgebuilding skills and techniques to AmeriCorps members](#)
- [Programs focused on implementing or expanding access to high-quality early learning and those that prepare AmeriCorps members to enter early learning careers](#)

Performance Measures

AmeriCorps has associated Performance Measures with its Focus Areas. Applications must include at least one aligned Performance Measure that may be either a National Performance Measure or applicant determined. AmeriCorps and GOCS value quality of performance measures over a quantity. Applicants should use Performance Measures as part of a comprehensive strategy that relies on both performance and evaluation data to learn from their work and make programmatic adjustments to achieve their goals.

Refer to AmeriCorps Performance Measure Instructions and [Performance Measure Review Criteria](#) for detailed information on performance measure requirements and data collection expectations. *Applicants are encouraged to use Appendix B: Performance Measure Checklist in the Performance Measure Instructions.*

FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

Program Authority

Awards under this Notice are authorized by the [National and Community Service Act of 1990](#), as amended, ([42 U.S.C. 12501 et seq.](#))

Estimated Available Funds

AmeriCorps and GOCS expect a highly competitive AmeriCorps grant selection process. AmeriCorps reserves the right to prioritize providing funding to existing awards over making new awards. Publication of this Notice does not obligate AmeriCorps to award any specific number of grants or to commit any particular amount of funding. The actual level, timing, and process of grant funding is subject to the availability of annual appropriations.

Estimated Award Amount

Grant awards have two components: operating funds and AmeriCorps member positions with corresponding Education Award amounts. Grant award amounts vary – both in the level of operating funds and in the type and amount of AmeriCorps member positions – as determined by the scope of the project.

Project and Award Period

AmeriCorps anticipates making three-year grant awards. AmeriCorps generally makes an initial award for the first year of the period of performance, based on the submitted one-year budget. Continuation awards for subsequent years are not guaranteed; they depend upon availability of appropriations and satisfactory performance (see [Review Criteria for Continuation Applicants](#)).

The earliest suggested program start date is September 1, 2024 with the understanding some applicants may choose to operate on the calendar year by starting January 1, 2025. AmeriCorps members may *not* be enrolled or count service hours prior to the start date of the award. A program may *not* certify any hours a member performs prior to the beginning of the member enrollment period as designated in the grant award.

Type of Award

AmeriCorps Operating Grants: AmeriCorps may award a Cost Reimbursement or a Fixed Amount grant to any successful applicant. AmeriCorps will not provide both types of grants for the same project in one fiscal year. For more information, see the *Eligible Applicants* Section in the Mandatory Supplemental Information.

Cost Reimbursement: Grant applications that require a line-item budget. Awarded grant reimbursement payments are based on allowable costs incurred and reported monthly to GOCS.

Fixed Amount: Grant applications that do not require a line-item budget. Must achieve 100% member enrollment and retention rates to receive the full amount of a fixed grant award. Fixed awards may be Full Cost, Education Award Program (EAP), Professional Corps, or No Cost Slots. A Fixed Amount grant is limited to certain applicants.

- Full Cost – Eligible to claim maximum cost per Member Service Year (MSY). May apply for all slot types (See MSY Values and Slots table below).
- Professional Corps - Must place qualified professionals in communities with an inadequate number of such professionals. Only Full Time Slots are available to this award type. Professional Corps program requirements are in the Mandatory Supplemental Information.
- Education Award Programs - AmeriCorps may provide operational support up to but not more than \$800 per individual enrolled in an approved National Service Position, or not more than \$1,000 per such individual if at least 50 percent of the persons enrolled in the program are disadvantaged youth. All slot types are available.
- No Cost Slots – Member positions with education awards only. Awards are made for \$0 cost per MSY. May apply for all slot types.

ELIGIBILITY, TYPES OF APPLICANTS, AND APPLICATION TYPE INFORMATION

Eligible Applicants

The following non-Federal entities (all of which are defined in [2 CFR §200.1](#)) are eligible to apply:

- Indian Tribes
- Institutions of higher education
- Local governments, including school districts
- Nonprofit organizations
- U.S. States and Territories

System for Award Management (SAM) & Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) Number

To receive an award, applicants must register with the [System for Award Management \(SAM\)](#) and maintain an active SAM registration until the application process is complete. If an applicant is awarded a grant, it must maintain an active SAM registration throughout the life of the award. See the [SAM Quick Guide for Grantees](#).

SAM registration must be renewed annually. AmeriCorps suggests applicants finalize a new registration or renew an existing one at least three weeks before the application deadline, to allow time to resolve any issues that may arise. *Applicants must use their SAM-registered legal name and physical address on AmeriCorps grant applications. The legal applicant's name and physical address in eGrants must EXACTLY match the applicant's SAM-registered information.*

AmeriCorps will not award a grant to entities that do not have a valid SAM registration and Unique Entity Identifier. If an applicant has not fully complied with these requirements by the time AmeriCorps is ready to make a federal award, AmeriCorps may determine the applicant is not qualified to receive an award and use that determination as a basis for making a federal award to another applicant.

Applications must include an Employer Identification Number and Unique Entity Identifier (UEI). UEI is generated as part of the SAM registration process. *UEI and Dun and Bradstreet (DUNS) numbers are not the same.* Applicants must use "My Account" on the eGrants home screen to enter UEI and EIN numbers in the "Edit Organization's Attributes" module. These entries will populate the Application's 424 Face sheet.

Types of Applicants

Single State Applicants: Organizations proposing to only operate in Montana must apply through ServeMontana. Each state and territory commission administers its own selection process and submits the selected applications to compete for funding directly to AmeriCorps. *A Single-State application from a State or Territory with a Commission that is submitted directly to AmeriCorps by the applicant instead of the Commission will be considered unresponsive and will not be reviewed.* See Mandatory Supplemental Information for applicant descriptions.

Federally Recognized Indian Tribes in Montana

Indian Tribes proposing to operate only in Montana are eligible to apply to this Notice, or may apply directly to [AmeriCorps Indian Tribes Grants National Direct Opportunity](#). If interested in pursuing an AmeriCorps Indian Tribes Grant, please contact GOCS for more information.

In addition to Indian Tribes (2 CFR §200.54), tribal organizations controlled, authorized, and chartered by Indian Tribes are also eligible to apply. An entity applying on behalf of one or more federally recognized tribe(s) must submit a Tribal Council adopted resolution or other authorization which covers the entire period of performance. The resolution must identify the entity by name as a tribal organization and indicate whether it is controlled, authorized, or chartered by an Indian Tribe(s). It must authorize the entity to be the legal applicant and act on

behalf of and include the Indian Tribe(s) in an AmeriCorps application for the purpose of conducting the activities and providing the services described in the application.

Multi-State Applicants: Organizations proposing to operate in more than one State or Territory apply directly to AmeriCorps. While National Direct applicants do not apply to State Service Commissions, they are required to coordinate with the Commissions in states where National Service programs will operate. ServeMontana expects National Direct applicants to comply with AmeriCorps' consultation requirements.

National Direct Consultation: Coordination among State Commissions and National Direct Applicants

In alignment with AmeriCorps, ServeMontana expects National Direct applicants to consult with the Commission and coordinate activities at the local level, as specified in Section 131 of the NCSA, 42 U.S.C. § 12583. This is designed to ensure effective use of national service resources and enhance coordination.

National Direct applicants, except federally recognized Indian Tribes, must:

- Before application submission:
 - Consult with the Commission of each state or territory in which the organization plans to operate and *describe the consultation in their application*.
 - Complete consultation at <https://serve.mt.gov/ameriCorps/national-direct-consultation>. Provide information that connects the proposed activities to the Montana State Service Plan and training opportunities.
- After Award:
 - Provide the Commission with appropriate contact information for the National Direct program and update the information on an annual basis.
 - Participate in the Commissions' periodic needs assessment in the development of the State Service Plan and participate in appropriate training and other events.
 - Include the Commission on the National Direct program's mailing/email distribution lists and invite it to appropriate training and other events.

State Commissions must:

- Before application submission:
 - Consult in a timely manner with National Direct applicants, except Indian Tribes, that contact Commissions prior to application submission.
- After Award:
 - Consider the schedules and needs of National Direct applicants, including Indian Tribes, operating in their states when planning annual events and technical assistance activities.
 - Include National Direct programs, including Indian Tribes, in their needs assessment and training plan development activities, and in the development of their State Service Plan.
 - Add staff of multi-state programs in their state to their mailing/email distribution lists and invite them to appropriate training and other events.

AmeriCorps solicits Commission input on National Direct applicants, except Indian Tribes, proposing to operate in their state/territory. The Commission provides input and indicates if they "support," "do not support," or are "neutral" on a project in eGrants. AmeriCorps reviews and considers this Commission input. Failure to consult will likely result in a "do not support" input to AmeriCorps.

Application Types

New Application

GOCS encourages applicants that have received prior funding from AmeriCorps to apply to this Notice. GOCS encourages applicants to plan for sustainable and mission capable program growth. As such, the general practice is for New Applicants to apply for at least 10 MSY but no more than 50 MSY for the first three-year grant cycle.

Organizations that have never received AmeriCorps funding are encouraged to consider ServeMontana's spring Formula grant opportunities. Applicants who have received AmeriCorps funding in the last three years are eligible to apply for Cost Reimbursement and Education Award Program (EAP) grants but are not eligible to apply for Full-Cost Fixed Amount grants. Existing subgrantees/operating sites of Fixed Amount and Cost Reimbursement grantees who can demonstrate a successful history and capacity to manage a Fixed Amount grant are considered to have AmeriCorps experience and are eligible to apply for Full Cost Fixed Amount grants. See [Type of Award](#).

Continuation Application

Organizations with current AmeriCorps State awards applying for program Year 2 or 3 are considered continuation applicants, and must submit an application to be eligible to receive funding for the FY2024 program year. Continuation applicants must follow the requirements for continuation applications as outlined in this Notice and the Application Instructions. Requests by existing continuation applicants for significant increases/decreases in the level of funding or number of positions will be assessed using the review criteria in this Notice. The review will also be based on progress and financial reports, evaluation plans, and GOCS staff knowledge of the program. To be approved for continuation funding, recipients must demonstrate satisfactory performance with respect to key program goals and requirements, and compliance with Grant Terms and Conditions.

In addition to the Application Instructions continuation narrative, concisely address the [Review Criteria for Continuation Applicants](#).

Continuation applicant's performance measures must comply with Performance Measure Instructions. To add or revise performance measures, use the Performance Measures Module. In the eGrants application Continuation Changes field, note updates to any performance measures. If significant increases or decreases to output or outcome targets for existing measures are proposed, provide a justification for the change.

GOCS and AmeriCorps reserve the right to award applications in an amount less than the requested level of funding and will document the rationale for doing so.

Recompete Application

Previously awarded organizations whose three-year AmeriCorps State competitive award period is ending, may apply to this Notice as a recompile applicant. Organizations who have successfully operated AmeriCorps programs for a minimum of 5 years and consulted GOCS are eligible to apply for Full-Cost Fixed Amount Grants.

Minimum Thresholds for All Applications

- Applications should meet all threshold requirements for the grant type for which they are applying.
- All applicants should request at least **10 Member Service Years (MSY)**. Applicants with less than **10 MSY** will be deemed nonresponsive and will not be reviewed.
- All applicants should budget for staff and member travel to the [ServeMontana Symposium](#). Symposium takes place annually in March, in Helena.
- Applicants should budget staff travel for new staff to attend America's Service Commission's AmeriCorps [Program and Fiscal Boot Camps](#), typically held in Austin, TX. Training is typically 5 days with 4-5 nights hotel stay.
- Applicants should budget staff travel and staff training for at least one program and one fiscal staff to attend the America's Service Commission's National Service Training (location to be determined). National Service Training is typically 3 days with 2 to 3 nights hotel stay. The registration fee is at least \$300 per person.
- If applying for a Professional Corps grant, the application must demonstrate the area affected has an inadequate number of professionals in the given concentration of operation.

- If the proposed service activities require specialized member qualifications and/or training the applicant must describe how the program will meet requirements (e.g., tutoring: 45 CFR §2522.910-.940).
- All applicants must propose program designs that are either evidence-based or evidence-informed. Applicants assessed as Pre-preliminary evidence tier must adequately describe how the proposed intervention is evidence-informed per the Mandatory Supplemental Information.

Other Eligibility Requirements

Under Section 132A(b) of [the National and Community Service Act of 1990, as amended](#), organizations that have violated a Federal criminal statute may not receive assistance described in this Notice.

Applications that propose to engage in prohibited activities listed in AmeriCorps’ statutes, regulations, or the terms and conditions of its awards are not eligible to receive AmeriCorps funding.

Note that under appropriations provisions annually enacted by Congress, if AmeriCorps is aware that any corporation has any unpaid federal tax liability that has been assessed; for which all judicial and administrative remedies have been exhausted or have lapsed; and that is not being paid in a timely manner pursuant to an agreement with the authority responsible for collecting the tax liability; that entity is not eligible for an award under this Notice. However, this exclusion will not apply to a corporation that a federal agency has considered for suspension or debarment and determined that suspension or debarment is not necessary to protect the interests of the federal government. Pursuant to the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995, an organization described in the [Internal Revenue Code of 1986, 26 U.S.C. §501 \(c\)\(4\)](#) that engages in lobbying activities is not eligible to apply for AmeriCorps funding.

FEDERAL FUNDING RESTRICTIONS AND BUDGET CONSIDERATIONS

Member Service Year (MSY)

Applicants request the number of positions per slot type in Budget Section II. The Budget calculates the total number of MSYs using the below values. See the Application Instructions for more details. Below is a description of available slot types.

Table: Member Service Year (MSY) Values and Slot Types

Slot Type	Minimum # of Hours	MSY Value
Full-time	1,700	1
Three Quarter-time	1,200	0.7
Half-time	900	0.5
Reduced Half-time	675	0.38095240
Quarter-time	450	0.26455027
Minimum-time	300	0.21164022

Cost per MSY

AmeriCorps cost per MSY is determined by dividing the Federal share of budgeted grant costs by the number of MSYs requested. It does not include childcare or the value of the education award a member may earn.

Maximum Cost per MSY

The maximum Cost per MSY is set by AmeriCorps on an annual basis. Applications cannot exceed the maximum cost per MSY for the respective application type. Applications that exceed that Maximum for the application type may be considered unresponsive to the requirements.

Table: Maximum Cost per MSY for Application Types

Application Type	Maximum Cost per MSY
Montana Competitive (Cost Reimbursement & Full Cost Fixed Award)	\$24,999
Professional Corps	\$1,000
Education Award Program	\$800 or \$1,000
No Cost Slot	\$0

Member Living Allowance

A living allowance is not a wage, [45 CFR §2522.245](#). Programs are required to provide a living allowance for members in full-time positions and members serving in a full-time capacity. Full time capacity is generally 32 hours or more per week for 6 weeks or more. Programs are not required to provide a living allowance for members serving in less than full time slot types and capacity. If a program provides a living allowance to a less than full-time member, it must comply with the limits in the table below. For Cost Reimbursement grants, the amount must be included in the proposed budget as either AmeriCorps or grantee share. Exceptions noted below.

While Fixed Amount grant applicants are not required to submit detailed budgets, applicants must provide a living allowance that complies with the minimum and maximum requirements.

Table: Minimum and Maximum Living Allowance

Slot Type	Minimum # of Hours	Minimum Living Allowance	Maximum Living Allowance
Full-time	1,700	\$18,700	\$37,400
Three Quarter-time	1,200	n/a	\$26,180
Half-time	900	n/a	\$18,700
Reduced Half-time	675	n/a	\$14,212
Quarter-time	450	n/a	\$9,724
Minimum-time	300	n/a	\$7,854

Exceptions to the Living Allowance Requirements

Programs existing prior to September 21, 1993 are not required to offer a living allowance. If an applicant chooses to offer a living allowance, it is exempt from the minimum requirement, but not the maximum requirement.

EAP Grantees are not required to provide a living allowance, but if a living allowance is provided, it must comply with the maximum requirements set forth in the Living Allowance Table above.

Professional Corps Grantees must provide members a living allowance or salary, which must meet the minimum, but may exceed the maximum living allowance set in the Living Allowance Table above. Professional Corps member salaries and benefits, including childcare, are paid entirely by the organizations with which the members serve; and are not included in the budget request to AmeriCorps (Federal share).

Segal AmeriCorps Education Award

AmeriCorps members who successfully complete a term of service are eligible for an Education Award from the National Service Trust. The amount of the Education Award is linked to the value of the Pell Grant. A member has up to seven years after their term of service to use the Education Award.

Note: Education Awards amounts are determined by the federal fiscal year of the grant award. Read the amounts listed on the [AmeriCorps website](#) very carefully.

Fixed Amount Grants

There is no specific match requirement for Fixed Amount grants. AmeriCorps does not provide all funds necessary to operate the program, therefore organizations should raise the additional funds required to operate the program. *Applicants who have successfully operated AmeriCorps programs for a minimum of 5 years and have consulted with GOCS are eligible to apply for Fixed Amount Grants.*

Fixed Amount applicants must be familiar with the [AmeriCorps Fixed Award Financial and Administrative Guide](#).

New applicants are eligible to apply for Cost Reimbursement and Education Award Program (EAP) grants but are not eligible to apply for Full-Cost Fixed Amount grants.

Cost Reimbursement Grants

Required Match

Applicants are required to match funds based on the chart below. Applicants must demonstrate the ability to meet the match requirement at the time of application submission. The source of funds can be state, local, or private cash and/or in-kind contributions. Applicants must indicate if the match is proposed or secured. A first-time successful applicant is required to match 24% for the first three-year funding period. Starting with year four, the match requirement gradually increases each year, to 50% by year ten, according to the minimum overall share chart found in 45 CFR §2521.60 and below.

Table: Cost Reimbursement Grant Required Match Schedule

AmeriCorps Funding Year	1, 2, 3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10+
Grantee Share Required Match	24%	26%	30%	34%	38%	42%	46%	50%

Section 121(e)(5) of NCSA (42 U.S.C. 12571(e)) requires programs that use other federal funds as match for an AmeriCorps grant to report the amount and source of these funds to AmeriCorps on a Federal Financial Report (FFR). Grantees must track and be prepared to report on that match separately each year and at closeout. GOCS requires documented permission allowing for funds to be used as match from the non-AmeriCorps federal entity.

Alternative Match

Under certain circumstances, applicants may qualify for an alternative matching schedule. The schedule is detailed in 45 CFR §2521.60(b) and culminates in 35% match instead of 50%. To qualify, applicants must demonstrate the proposed program is either located in a rural county or in a severely economically distressed community as defined in the Application Instructions. *To receive consideration, an alternative match request must be submitted to GOCS by the date specified in the Timeline.*

Indirect Costs

Application budgets may include indirect costs, however no more than five percent of award funds may be used to recover indirect costs on AmeriCorps State and National grants (45 CFR §2521.95 and §2540.110). Applicants may use the Five/Ten Percent Fixed Administrative Costs, a Federally-approved indirect cost rate (IDCR), or a 10 percent *de minimis* rate (see Attachment B in the Application Instructions), or may claim certain costs directly, as outlined in 2 CFR §200.413. States, local governments, and Indian Tribes may use previously approved indirect cost allocation plans. All methods must be applied consistently across all Federal awards. Applicants that have a Federal negotiated IDCR or that will be using the 10 percent *de minimis* rate must enter that information in the Organization section in eGrants. Use the [AmeriCorps eGrants IDCR User Instructions](#) for how to enter the organization's IDCR in eGrants.

Pre-award Costs

If awarded, and with prior written approval from GOCS, applicants are permitted to charge the following expenses to the grant before the budget period:

- National Service Criminal History Checks costs
- Supplies including National Service Gear
- Staff time and benefits

These expenses must be submitted for reimbursement with the first financial report.

APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

Application Package

Information necessary to apply is at <https://serve.mt.gov/americorps/americorps-grants/>. Applicants may email serve@mt.gov or call 406-444-5547 for printed materials or alternative formats.

Content and Form of Application

In eGrants, applicants enter the following components of a complete application:

- Standard Form 424 (SF-424) Face Sheet: Populates when applicant completes eGrants fields in Applicant Info and My Organization Info portions of eGrants
- Narratives
 - Executive Summary
 - Program Design
 - Organizational Capability
 - Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy
 - Evaluation Summary/Plan
 - Continuation Changes
 - Clarification
- Logic Model
- Performance Measures
- Standard Form 424A Budget and Budget Narrative
- Authorization, Assurances, and Certification

Page Limits

Page limits are determined by the Application for Federal Assistance as printed from eGrants. Character limits in eGrants fields do not align with page limits set in the Notice, and eGrants will allow applicants to enter text exceeding page limits. Document length in word processing will likely be different than the eGrants printout.

Two application components have page limits that *must be* adhered to: Application & Narratives and Logic Model.

- Application & Narratives - Applications must not exceed 10 pages when printed from eGrants.
 - Application sections that count towards the page limit are the:
 - SF-424 Face Sheet
 - Narrative portions contained in the Executive Summary, Program Design, Organizational Capability, and Cost-Effectiveness & Budget Adequacy narratives.
 - Application page limits *do not* include the Budget; Budget Narrative; Performance Measures; Continuation, Amendment, or Clarification narratives; Evaluation Plan; or any required additional documents.
- Logic Model
 - The Logic Model may not exceed **eight pages** when printed with the application from the “Review” tab in eGrants.

The **page limit for the Continuation Changes field is six pages**, when printed from eGrants.

To confirm the application does not exceed the page limits, GOCS strongly encourages applicants to print the Application for Federal Assistance from the “Review and Submit” tab in eGrants prior to submission.

Reviewers will not consider material over the page limits in the printed report.

How to Submit an Application

Applications must be submitted electronically in [eGrants](#). It is *strongly recommended* that applicants initiate and begin the eGrants application well before the deadline. Applicants should draft the content in a word processing document, then copy and paste the content into the appropriate eGrants fields. The length of a document in word processing software will likely be different than what will print out in eGrants- *follow the [page limits](#)*.

The applicant’s authorized representative must be the person who certifies and submits the application, and must use their own eGrants account to do so. Applicants must have a current authorized signature list on file with GOCS, and the authorized representative must be on that list.

A copy of the governing body’s authorization for the official representative must be on file in the applicant’s office. If a problem arises when creating an account or preparing or submitting the application, contact the AmeriCorps Hotline at 1-800-942-2677 or via [Live Chat or Webform](#), and inform GOCS. Be prepared to provide the application ID, organization name, and the Notice the organization is applying to. If the issue cannot be resolved by the deadline, applicants must continue working with the AmeriCorps Hotline to submit the application via eGrants.

Submission Dates and Times

Letter of Intent

New, Recompete, and Continuation applicants must notify GOCS of their intent to apply by completing the following actions by **Friday, October 6, 2023, 5:00 pm Mountain Time**:

- [Submit a Letter of Intent via the web form available on https://serve.mt.gov/ameriCorps/ameriCorps-grants/](https://serve.mt.gov/ameriCorps/ameriCorps-grants/)
- Submit the following to serve@mt.gov :
 - PDF of SAM.gov certification and Universal Entity Identifier
 - Documentation of Indirect Cost Rate, if applicable
 - [Confirmation that the Organization’s most recent Single Audit is available on the Federal Audit Clearinghouse](#), as applicable per [2 CFR 200.501](#), or indication that a Single Audit is Not Applicable.

Application Package

Applications are due in eGrants and Additional Documents emailed to serve@mt.gov by **Thursday, October 26, 2023, 5:00 pm Mountain Time**. *Incomplete applications will not be considered.* Late applications may not be reviewed, see below.

- This deadline applies to new, continuation, and recompetite applicants, and includes submission of additional documents. ServeMontana reserves the right to add documents to the RFP and to extend the deadline. Any such changes will be posted on the GOCS website.
- **When the application is submitted in eGrants, notify GOCS by emailing serve@mt.gov.**

Additional Documents

Only submit items requested in this Notice and Application Instructions. Items submitted that are not requested will not be reviewed or returned. Applicants are required to submit additional documents by the application package deadline.

All Applicants:

- Labor union concurrence (if applicable)
- Federal debt delinquency concurrence (if applicable)

New and Recompete Applicants (see also separate sections for New Applicants and Recompete Applicants below):

- Two letters of support
- Operational and Financial Management Survey (OFMS), [submitted electronically via the AmeriCorps online form](#). Forms submitted as a PDF or any other format may not be accepted. [Applicants will receive a confirmation email upon submission and must submit a copy of this email to GOCS as an Additional Document.](#)
- Evaluation briefs, reports, studies. See the Evidence Base section of this Notice and Mandatory Supplemental Information for detailed instructions by evidence tier. If multiple evaluation briefs/reports/studies are submitted by the applicant, the most recent (as measured by the date of completion or publication) will be reviewed first, and documents submitted beyond the allowable number will not be reviewed.

New Applicants (Only):

Data collection system description or plan. Must not exceed 2 pages in Microsoft Word, and includes:

- Description of the applicant's data collection system and how it is sufficient to collect high quality performance measurement data during the first three years of the grant. If the applicant does not yet have a data collection system, describe the plan and timeline for developing a high-quality system.
- Description of how performance data (including AmeriCorps Performance Measures and other process and outcome measures, if applicable) will be used to improve the program in the first three years of funding.

GOCS and AmeriCorps may require submission of data collection instruments if approved for funding. For more information on developing a high-quality data collection plan, visit the following links:

<https://americorps.gov/grantees-sponsors/evaluation-resources>

<https://americorps.gov/grantees-sponsors/national-performance-measurement-core-curriculum>

Recompete Applicants (Only)

- Applicants who have previously received **two or more years** of competitive funding for the same project being proposed:
 - Evaluation Plan using the evaluation plan template available on the Notice webpage. Evaluation plans are not scored and will not be reviewed until after funding determination.
- Applicants who have previously received **five or more years** of competitive funding for the same project being proposed:
 - Evaluation report submitted in Microsoft Word. The evaluation report should include a title page with the AmeriCorps grant number for the project that was evaluated, the name of the project, and the date of completion of the report. If any of this required information is missing, the applicant may not receive credit for meeting the evaluation requirements.
 - Evaluation Plan using the template found available on the Notice webpage. Evaluation plans are not scored and will not be reviewed until after funding determination.

Additional Documents Formatting and Submission

Email Additional Documents to serve@mt.gov with the subject: [Legal Applicant Name] – [Application ID number].

Emails should include:

- the legal applicant's name and point of contact information
- a list of documents that should be attached to the email
- clearly labelled attachments as individually saved files

- files that include, within each document,
 - a header,
 - the legal applicant’s name, and
 - application ID number
- if the size of an applicant’s files requires multiple emails, please also include an ordering system in the subject line, such as “(1 of 3)”

Tribal Sanctioning Resolution Additional Documents

Entities applying on behalf of a Federally Recognized Tribe must submit the sanctioning resolution adopted by the Tribal Council of each Indian Tribe (See *Eligible Applicants*) [by the end of the State of Montana clarification period \(typically December\)](#), if recommended for funding by the Commission.

REVIEW CRITERIA FOR NEW AND RECOMPETE APPLICANTS

Each applicant must describe a project to deploy AmeriCorps members to effectively meet community needs. GOCS urges applicants to submit high quality applications that follow the Notice and Application Instructions. Application and budget quality are key factors in determining the funding recommendation.

Applications should be based in evidence and include in line citations only; reviewers will not consider any documents or linked reports external to the application other than evaluation report(s) submitted.

Applications should include a well-designed plan with clear and compelling justifications for requesting funds. Reviewers will assess the quality of applications by using the selection criteria described in this Notice, and will consider the weights assigned to each criterion.

Applicants should address the assessment criteria below. Respond to criteria in the order they appear in this Notice and format each narrative subsection heading in ALL CAPITAL LETTERS. Reviewers will consider the quality of the application’s response. Do not assume all criteria are of equal value. Use subsection points to prioritize the length of information provided in the narratives.

Prior to submission, GOCS recommends applicants use the assessment criteria and/or score sheet to review the application or have a peer review.

The Scoring Matrix is available on ServeMontana’s AmeriCorps Grants page.

Table: Required Narratives

Required Narrative Fields	Narrative Subsection	Subsection Points
Executive Summary		Pass/Fail
Program Design	COMMUNITY AND LOGIC MODEL	24
	EVIDENCE TIER	12
	EVIDENCE QUALITY	8
	NOTICE PRIORITY	0
	MEMBER EXPERIENCE	6
Organizational Capability	ORGANIZATION BACKGROUND AND STAFFING	15
	MEMBER SUPERVISION	6
	COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND ACCESSIBILITY	4
Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy	MEMBER RECRUITMENT	7
	MEMBER RETENTION	8
	DATA COLLECTION	7
	BUDGET ALIGNMENT TO PROGRAM DESIGN	3

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (REQUIRED – PASS/FAIL)

Fill in the blanks of these sentences to complete the Executive Summary. ***Do not deviate from the template.***

The [Name of the organization] proposes to have [Number of] AmeriCorps members who will [service activities the members will be doing] in [the locations the AmeriCorps members will serve]. At the end of the first program year, AmeriCorps members will be responsible for [anticipated outcome of project]. In addition, the AmeriCorps members will leverage [number of leveraged volunteers, if applicable] who will engage in [what the leveraged volunteers will be doing.]

The AmeriCorps investment of \$[amount of request] will be matched with \$[amount of projected match], \$[amount of local, state, and federal funds] in public funding and \$[amount of non-governmental funds] in private funding.

Fixed-Amount grant applicants (Full-cost Fixed, Professional Corps, Education Award Program, No Cost Slots) should list their Other Revenue (see Mandatory Supplemental Information) because they are not required to provide a specific amount of match, but still raise significant additional resources to operate the program.

PROGRAM DESIGN NARRATIVE (50 POINTS TOTAL)

Community, Logic Model, and Performance Measures (24 points)

Ensure both the Community section and Logic Model incorporate the Funding Priorities listed in this Notice.

Community

The applicant will provide a detailed summary of the community need, including:

- The need is prevalent and severe in communities where the program plans to serve and the community need has been documented with relevant data including using the [CDC’s Social Vulnerability Index](#).
- The role current or historical inequities faced by underserved communities may play in contributing to the need.

Logic Model

The applicant's intervention is likely to lead to the outcomes identified in the Logic Model. No narrative is needed other than what is contained within the Logic Model.

The Logic Model is a visual tool representing short, medium, and/or long-term outcomes. Applicants are not required to measure all components of the Logic Model. The applicant's performance measures should be consistent with the program's Logic Model and represent significant program activities. Applicants with multiple interventions should complete one Logic Model and depict each intervention on a separate line. Logic Models must be submitted in eGrants and must not exceed eight pages as printed out in the Application for Federal Assistance from the Review Tab of the application.

Rationales and justifications should be informed by the organization's performance data (e.g., program data observed over time that suggests targets are reasonable), relevant research (e.g. targets documented by organizations running similar programs with similar populations), or prior program evaluation findings.

A Logic Model Template word document is available in the Application Documents and Resources section of the ServeMontana grants page to assist in building the Logic Model.

The Logic Model will depict:

- A summary of the community need.
- Inputs or resources necessary to deliver the intervention, including but not limited to:
 - Locations or sites where members will provide services
 - **Context (setting) in which the intervention is delivered**
 - Number of AmeriCorps members who will deliver the intervention
 - **Characteristics of AmeriCorps members, including specific knowledge, skills, and abilities required to implement the intervention**
- Core activities of intervention or program model that members will implement or deliver, including:
 - Duration of the intervention (e.g., total number of weeks, sessions, or months of the intervention)
 - Dosage of the intervention (e.g., the number of hours per session or sessions per week)
 - Target population for the intervention (e.g., disconnected youth, third graders at a certain reading proficiency level)
- Measurable outputs resulting from delivering the intervention (i.e. number of beneficiaries served, types and number of activities conducted, **equity gaps closed**). If applicable, identify which National Performance Measures will be used as output indicators.
- Outcomes that demonstrate **meaningful** changes in knowledge/skill, attitude, behavior, or condition resulting from the intervention. If applicable, identify which National Performance Measures will be used as outcome indicators.

Performance Measures (see Performance Measure Instructions for full details)

All applications must include at least one aligned performance measure (output paired with outcome) that corresponds to the proposed primary intervention. This may be a National Performance Measure or an applicant-determined measure depending on program design, however applicant-determined performance measures cannot duplicate existing National Performance Measures. Applicants are not expected to have performance measures for every program activity.

Applications may also include National Performance Measure outputs without associated outcome(s) provided the output measures a significant program activity. Output-only measures do not fulfill the requirement for an aligned performance measure but may be selected in addition to the aligned measure(s).

The Performance Measures section addresses:

- Selected performance measures align with interventions described in the Logic Model.
- Targets appear reasonable and are set using the rationale described in the Logic Model.
- Described data collection practices and instruments are sufficient to ensure reported data is valid, complete, consistent, accurate, and verifiable.

A staff review will be conducted of the full performance measure section using Appendix B: Performance Measures Checklist found in the Performance Measure Instructions.

Evidence Base

Evidence Tier (12 points)

An evidence tier will be assessed for each applicant for the purpose of understanding the relative strength of each applicant's evidence base and the likelihood the proposed intervention will lead to outcomes identified in the logic model. All evidence tiers are defined in the Mandatory Supplemental Information. Applicants must meet all requirements of an evidence tier to be considered for that tier. If the evaluation reports submitted by the applicant do not meet the definitions in the Mandatory Supplemental Information, the applicant may be considered for a lower evidence tier.

In 2023, evidence tiers of successful AmeriCorps State and National applicants were: Strong, 25%; Moderate, 12%; Preliminary, 20%; and Pre-Preliminary, 43%. AmeriCorps values and funds programs all along the evidence continuum and expects programs to progress along the evidence continuum over time. **Applicants should not be deterred from applying due to their current evidence level.**

To qualify for the Preliminary, Moderate, or Strong evidence tier, the applicant submits the evaluation report from their last three-year grant cycle (if applicable) and/or up to two additional outcome or impact evaluation reports of the same intervention (see Mandatory Supplemental Information for definition of "same intervention") described in the application [and Logic Model](#).

In the Evidence Tier subsection of the Program Design narrative, describe:

- the study design, key findings of any submitted outcome or impact evaluation report(s)
- any other evidence that supports the program, including past performance measure data and/or other research studies that inform the program design.

If submitted report(s) evaluated a different program, describe in the Community section narrative and Logic Model how the intervention evaluated in the submitted report(s) matches the proposed "same intervention" in the following areas:

- Characteristics of the beneficiary population
- Characteristics of the population delivering the intervention
- Dosage (frequency, duration) and design of the intervention, including all key components and activities
- The context in which the intervention is delivered
- Outcome(s) of the intervention

Reports that do not sufficiently match the proposed intervention in all areas will not be considered applicable. Submission of additional documents inconsistent with the guidance and requirements described in the Notice (e.g., advocacy pieces, policy briefs, other narratives that are not research studies or program evaluations) will not be reviewed.

Evidence Quality (8 points)

The quality of the applicant's evidence and the extent to which it supports the proposed program design will be assessed and scored.

For applicants assessed as being in the Preliminary, Moderate, or Strong evidence tiers, reviewers will score the submitted evaluation reports using the following standards:

- The submitted reports are of satisfactory methodological quality and rigor for the type of evaluation conducted (e.g., adequate sample size and statistical power, internal and/or external validity, appropriate use of control or comparison groups, etc.);
- The submitted reports describe evaluations that were conducted relatively recently, preferably within the last six years;
- The submitted reports show a meaningful and significant positive effect on program beneficiaries [or AmeriCorps members](#) in at least one key outcome of interest.

For applicants assessed as being in the Pre-Preliminary evidence tier, reviewers will score the narrative provided in the Evidence Base section of the application using the following standards:

- The applicant uses relevant evidence, including past performance measure data and/or cited research studies, to inform the proposed program design;
- The described evidence is relatively recent, preferably from the last six years;
- The evidence described by the applicant indicates a meaningful positive effect on program beneficiaries [or AmeriCorps members](#) in at least one key outcome of interest.

Applicants assessed in the Pre-Preliminary evidence tier who do not provide adequate responses to the Evidence Quality standards will not meet the threshold requirements for this Notice and will not be considered for funding.

All applicants are required to provide additional information in the form of an Evaluation Plan or a Performance Data Collection System or Plan detailed by applicant type in the [Additional Documents](#) section. However, information provided will not be scored and will not be reviewed until after funding is determined.

Notice Priority (0 points)

- The applicant's proposed program fits within one or more of the AmeriCorps and Montana funding priorities as outlined in the *Funding Priorities* section and meets all requirements of the priority.

Member Experience (6 points)

- [AmeriCorps members will be provided a high-quality, asset-based orientation to the community that is guided and informed by the community.](#)
- [AmeriCorps members will be provided the opportunity to be leaders and gain skills during their term of service that will be valued by future employers \(e.g., workforce pathways, increasing levels of responsibility and leadership roles for members\).](#)
- Member experience will be enhanced through civic reflections. Members will be trained on elevator speeches and are encouraged to speak about their role and position while in service. Participants, staff, and community members will know they are AmeriCorps members.
- AmeriCorps members receive additional benefits.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPABILITY (25 POINTS TOTAL)

Reviewers will consider the quality of the application's response to the following criteria. Do not assume all sub-criteria are of equal value.

Organizational Background and Staffing (15 points)

- The applicant details the roles, responsibilities, and structure of the staff that will implement, provide oversight, and monitor the program.
- The applicant has facilitated, partnered, or participated in educational or workforce development programs (i.e., pre-apprenticeship/registered apprenticeship, work experience and job training programs, etc.).
- The applicant describes the organizations' mission and relevant experience in areas such as volunteer recruitment and management, community outreach, overcoming project implementation challenges, etc.

Member Supervision (6 points)

- AmeriCorps members will receive sufficient guidance and support from the site supervisor to provide effective service (e.g., supervision structure: cadence and format of supervisor/AmeriCorps member check-ins; member and supervisor opportunities to assess strengths, opportunities for growth; member training plan, etc.).
- AmeriCorps supervisors will be adequately trained/prepared to follow AmeriCorps and program regulations, priorities, and expectations (e.g., structure for supervisor support; supervisor training plan related to supervision and AmeriCorps rules and regulations; cadence and format of AmeriCorps supervisors/their supervisors check-ins; opportunities to assess strengths, opportunities for growth of supervisors, etc.).

Commitment to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (4 points)

- The leadership and staff of the organization have similar lived experience as the beneficiary population and/or community being served.
- The applicant's definitions of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility are demonstrated by the organization (e.g., diversity on the Board of Directors, staff, leadership, and/or volunteers) and the organization upholds a supportive and safe environment for individuals of diverse backgrounds.

COST EFFECTIVENESS AND BUDGET ADEQUACY (25 POINTS TOTAL)

Reviewers will assess the quality of the application's response to the following criteria. All organizations applying for a program grant must respond to the following criteria, regardless of grant type.

Member Recruitment (7 points)

- The applicant provides a description of budget expenses to support successful recruitment of AmeriCorps members best suited to serve the community, for example from geographic or demographic communities in which the program operates.
- The applicant has a recruitment plan for engaging a diverse and inclusive group of members.

Member Retention (8 points)

- The applicant provides a description of budget expenses to support retention of AmeriCorps members (e.g., additional member benefits such as providing a living allowance above the minimum, supporting workforce pathways through resume building and certifications, coaching of members, individual benefit and community building, network building, member recognition, alumni programming, etc.).

Data Collection (7 Points)

- The applicant provides a description of budgeted items that support data collection and how data collected will support continuous improvement. Description should include budgeted items that support assessing community impacts and member experience that are a result of the service intervention.

Budget Alignment to Program Design (3 Points)

- The applicant's budget is aligned with the program narrative. Activities discussed in the narrative are present in the budget, federal and/or grantee share, as applicable. Fixed award applicants should concisely describe how program activities discussed in the narrative will be achieved.

GOCs staff will also conduct a “budget check” on the application’s budget and budget narrative. Proposed budgets that contain MSY costs that exceed the maximum cost per MSY and/or less than required match will be considered unresponsive to the application criteria.

EVALUATION PLAN (0 POINTS)

Enter “N/A”. Any other text entered in this field will not be reviewed.

AMENDMENT JUSTIFICATION (0 POINTS)

Enter N/A. This field will be used if the applicant is awarded a grant and needs to amend it.

CLARIFICATION INFORMATION (0 POINTS)

Enter N/A. This field will be used to enter information that requires clarification in the post-review period.

CONTINUATION CHANGES (0 POINTS)

Enter N/A if recompeting. This field is used to enter continuation narratives for continuation requests. Continuation changes should be labeled by program year. Do not delete prior year’s continuation changes, if applicable.

REVIEW CRITERIA FOR CONTINUATION APPLICATIONS

For each continuation application, ServeMontana staff will complete a continuation assessment (Appendix A) that provides reviewers with critical grantee performance information. Reviewers will provide continuation applicants with feedback on the continuation narrative and budget but will primarily score the application based on the information provided in the staff assessment. Applicants should use headers, provide detail for each of the following subsections, and should utilize eGrants S & N Reports to calculate rates, where applicable.

BUDGET, MATCH, AND COST PER MSY (10 POINTS)

Commission staff assessment will provide reviewers with budget performance information. This information will include actual spending compared to the budget, ability to meet budgeted match, and the cost per MSY as compared to previous operating periods. Applicants should briefly describe changes to the Budget, Match, or Cost per MSY with rationale.

COMPLIANCE FINDINGS (10 POINTS)

Commission staff assessment will describe the applicant’s risk level, and any compliance findings identified during the last full program year. If the applicant and/or service site locations had compliance findings or areas of risk identified, the applicant should provide an explanation, describing corrective action taken and the plan for improvement.

MEMBER ENROLLMENT (10 POINTS)

Commission staff assessment will indicate the enrollment rate. The expectation is 100% enrollment. If the program enrolled less than 100% of the slots, or enrolled members outside the 8-day enrollment period during the last full program year. State and National Enrollment Rate report calculates this by adding slots filled and refill slots filled, then dividing by slots awarded.

MEMBER RETENTION AND EXIT (10 POINTS)

Commission staff assessment will indicate the member retention rate and exit periods. The expectation is 90% retention. If the applicant retained less than 90% of members during the last full program year, or exited members outside the 30-day exit period. While retention rates may vary among effective programs depending on the program model, the expectation is that programs pursue the highest retention rate possible. State and National Retention Rate report is calculated by dividing the number of members exited with award (full or partial award) by the number of members enrolled.

PERFORMANCE MEASURE PROGRESS VERSUS STATED GOALS (10 POINTS)

Commission staff assessment will describe the applicant's results against performance measure targets during the last program year. How successful has the applicant been in addressing the identified need? If the program did not meet performance targets, provide an explanation, and describe the plan for improvement.

APPLICATION REVIEW AND AWARD DETERMINATION PROCESS

Montana Application Review

Applications cleared through this process will be submitted to AmeriCorps for final funding determination. The review process will consist of:

- GOCS staff review Letters of Intent, Additional Documents, and Audit Report as applicable. If it is determined the applicant has sufficient capacity to manage federal grants, they may continue in the application process.
- Submitted applications are reviewed for compliance with pertinent state and federal regulations, and responsiveness to the RFP. All compliant and responsive applications will continue through the review process.
- Applications passing staff review will next be reviewed by a Grant Review Workgroup.
- The Grant Review Workgroup will individually score the applications then convene with applicants present to arrive at consensus scores, ranking of applicants, and a funding recommendation.
- The funding recommendation is presented to the Montana Commission on Community Service for approval. If the funding recommendation is rejected by the Commission the review process may be repeated.
- Following approval of the funding recommendation, applicants may receive time sensitive requests to provide clarifying information and/or make required changes to the application.

If unforeseen challenges or circumstances make it impossible, impracticable, or inefficient to conduct the review process as planned, GOCS and AmeriCorps reserve the right to adjust or make changes to the review process anytime. Adjustments or changes will not affect the assessment criteria.

Funding priority will be given to continuation applicants. Following continuation applications, funding priority will be given to applications in order of the consensus scores assigned by the Grant Review Workgroup. Review scores will not necessarily have a direct bearing on the distribution of funds, however, a lower scoring application will not be recommended for funding at the expense of a higher scoring one. Distribution of funds will be based on the assessment of the Grant Review Workgroup as to how best to carry out the mission of GOCS. When making funding recommendations, the Grant Review Workgroup will consider the consensus score, effectiveness of the program in addressing Montana's needs, priorities set by the Governor and/or State Service Plan, and commission staff input.

All applications approved by the Montana Commission for submission to AmeriCorps are subject to the following review and selection process.

AmeriCorps Application Review

External Review: External Reviewers will assess applications based on Program Design, Organizational Capability, Cost-Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy, and Evidence Selection Criteria. AmeriCorps will recruit and select reviewers based on demonstrated expertise in AmeriCorps State and National programming and/or the Focus Areas and in assessing applications. All External Reviewers will be screened for conflicts of interest.

Internal Review: AmeriCorps will review the input from the Commission about National Direct applications. [Agency staff will assess budget compliance and review for prohibited activities.](#)

Post-Review Quality Control

After the initial review process is complete, AmeriCorps staff will review the initial results for fairness and consistency. Applications may be selected for Post-Review Quality Control assessment, which is used to ensure fairness and provide assurances that applications were not disadvantaged in the original review.

AmeriCorps Applicant Clarification

AmeriCorps may ask an applicant for clarifying information after notification of competition results. An applicant's failure to respond to a request for clarification adequately and in a timely manner may result in the removal of its application from the award process.

Resolution Process

As a result of the review, applicants may receive time sensitive requests to provide resolution information and/or make changes to the application including the budget. [AmeriCorps ask all subrecipients for a written compliance implementation plan that includes notification of waste, fraud, and abuse to the agency's OIG. AmeriCorps will provide a template.](#) This information is used by AmeriCorps staff in making final funding determination. Failure to respond to AmeriCorps/GOCS requests for additional information in response to Resolution items in a timely fashion may result in the removal of application from consideration.

Pre-Award Risk Assessment

AmeriCorps staff will assess the risks posed by each applicant and assess an applicant's ability to manage federal funds. This evaluation is in addition to those about the applicant's eligibility and the quality of its application based on the Selection Criteria. Results from this evaluation will inform funding decisions. If AmeriCorps determines an award will be made to an applicant with assessed risks, then special conditions corresponding to the degree of assessed risk may be applied to the award. [Applicants may not be selected for funding if AmeriCorps determines the applicant's risks cannot be mitigated.](#)

Due Diligence, including:

- Federal debt delinquency
- Suspension and debarment
- Information available through Office of Management and Budget (OMB)- designated repositories of government-wide eligibility qualification or financial integrity information, such as:
 - [U.S. Treasury Bureau of Fiscal Services](#)
 - [System for Award Management \(SAM\)](#)
 - "Do Not Pay"
- Reports and findings from single audits performed under Uniform Administrative Guidance and findings of any other available audits or investigations
- IRS Tax Form 990
- [Oversight.gov](#)
- Public Litigation Records

Operational and Financial Management:

- Financial stability
- Operational and Financial Management Survey

Past Performance:

- Applicant's record in managing previous AmeriCorps awards, cooperative agreements, or procurement awards:
 - Timely compliance with applicable reporting requirements
 - [Accuracy of data reported](#)
 - [Validity of performance measure data reported](#)
 - Conformity to the terms and conditions of previous Federal awards
 - Ability to effectively implement statutory, regulatory, or other requirements
 - Timely closeout of other awards
 - Meeting matching requirements
 - The extent to which any previously awarded amounts will be expended prior to future awards
 - National Service Criminal History Check compliance

Commission staff will assess their subgrantees' programmatic past performance using the criteria above and submit those assessments to AmeriCorps.

Other Programmatic Risks:

- Publicly available information, including from the applicant organization's website
- [Amount of funding requested](#)
- [Other elements, such as keyword searches for prohibited activities](#)

Applicants will find information to help them understand pre-award due diligence checks in the [AmeriCorps Due Diligence Review Process and Compliance training](#) available on the [Manage Your Grant](#) webpage. This content will help applicants obtain due diligence compliance and remain compliant throughout the grant life.

Consideration of Integrity and Performance System Information

Prior to making any award that exceeds \$250,000, AmeriCorps is required to review and consider any information about the applicant in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM.gov (See [41 U.S.C. §2313](#)). Additionally, AmeriCorps may expand upon these requirements and use its discretion to review and consider information about any applicant receiving an award, including those under \$250,000.

Any applicant, at its option, may review information in the designated integrity and performance systems accessible through SAM.gov and comment on any information about itself that a Federal awarding agency previously entered and is currently in the designated integrity and performance system.

AmeriCorps may consider comments by any applicant, in addition to other information in the designated integrity and performance system, in making a judgment about the applicant's integrity, business ethics, and record of performance under federal awards when completing its review of risk posed by the applicant under the Risk Assessment Evaluation section of this Notice.

AmeriCorps' Selection for Funding The review and selection processes are designed to:

- Identify how well eligible applications are aligned with the application selection criteria
- Build a diversified portfolio based on the following strategic considerations:
 - AmeriCorps Funding Priorities
 - meaningful representation of
 - rural communities

- innovative community strategies
- *CEO discretion to advance strategic goals*

AmeriCorps will assess an applicant's strategic considerations. Applicants must check the relevant boxes in the Program Information tab in eGrants and should only check the boxes if the strategic consideration is a significant and intentional part of the program design and strategies are described in the application.

In selecting applicants to receive awards under this Notice, the Chief Executive Officer will endeavor to include a diverse portfolio of applications based on staff recommendations, alignment with selection criteria, and strategic considerations.

AmeriCorps reserves the right to prioritize funding existing awards over making new awards. GOCS reserves the right to recommend, and AmeriCorps reserves the right to award applications in an amount other than at the requested level of funding and will document the rationale for doing so.

AmeriCorps reserves the right to adjust or make changes to the review process, if unforeseen challenges or urgent circumstances make it impossible, impracticable, or inefficient to conduct the review process as planned. Any such adjustments or changes will not affect the [Selection Criteria](#) used to assess applications.

Feedback to Applicants

Each compliant applicant will receive feedback from the External Review of its application.

Transparency in Grantmaking

AmeriCorps is committed to transparency in grantmaking. A list of all approved new and re-competing applications will be published on [AmeriCorps Funded Grants](#) within 90 business days after all grants are awarded.

Submitted program narratives, executive summaries, a blank template of the external review worksheet, and a list of all external reviewers who completed the review process for successful applications will be available upon request via email to AmeriCorpsOGA@cns.gov.

FEDERAL AWARD ADMINISTRATION REQUIREMENTS

Anticipated Announcement and Federal Award Dates

AmeriCorps will make awards following the selection announcement. AmeriCorps anticipates announcing the results of this funding opportunity in late April 2024 to State Commissions, contingent on the availability of congressional appropriations. Applicants will then be notified by GOCS as to funding decisions. This notification is not an authorization to begin grant activities. A formal Notice of Grant Award will be produced and the state subaward contracting process will be initiated.

Uniform Guidance

All awards made under this Notice are subject to the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (Uniform Guidance), in [2 CFR Parts 200](#) and [2205](#).

Requests for Monitoring or Payment Integrity Information

AmeriCorps will request documentation from award recipients in order to monitor the grantee and award to ensure compliance with legal requirements, including the [Payment Integrity Information Act of 2019](#). Failure to make timely responses to these requests may result in award funds being placed on manual hold, reimbursement only status, or other remedies may be applied as appropriate.

AmeriCorps Terms and Conditions

All awards made under this Notice will be subject to the FY2024 AmeriCorps General Terms and Conditions, and the FY2024 AmeriCorps State and National Terms and Conditions. These Terms and Conditions contain detailed, mandatory compliance and reporting requirements. Current versions of the AmeriCorps General and AmeriCorps State and National Terms and Conditions are available at [AmeriCorps Manage Your Grant](#).

National Service Criminal History Check Requirements

The National Service Criminal History Check (NSCHC) is a specific screening procedure established by law to protect the beneficiaries of national service. Programs are encouraged to minimize barriers to service without putting their program beneficiaries at genuine risk. [The law requires grantees to conduct and document NSCHCs on persons \(including award-funded staff, national service participants, or volunteers\) receiving a salary, living allowance, stipend, or education award through a program receiving AmeriCorps funds. This includes staff that receive part of their salary through a subgrant.](#)

- Award subrecipients must conduct an NSCHC for AmeriCorps members and staff funded under, or whose salary is reflected as match on the award. [Limited exceptions are described in 45 CFR 2540.201.](#)
- AmeriCorps strongly encourages applicants to review the [NSCHC regulations and additional guidance](#) to fully understand how to comply with the requirements. AmeriCorps also strongly encourages award recipients to utilize the two AmeriCorps-approved vendors to conduct all components of NSCHC.
- The cost of conducting NSCHC is an allowable expense under the award and the individual subject to the NSCHC **must** not be required to cover the cost.
- [Failure to fully comply with all NSCHC requirements will result in significant disallowed costs and unpleasant consequences.](#)

[Recipients must complete the following criminal history check components:](#)

1. National Sex Offender Public website through NSOPW.gov (nationwide check).
2. State criminal history record repository or agency-designated alternative for the individual's State of residence *and* State of service.
3. Fingerprint-based check of the FBI criminal history record database.

All checks must be conducted, reviewed, and eligibility determination before the individual begins work or service. [45 CFR 2540.200– 2540.207](#) and [National Service Criminal History Check Resources](#) contain complete guidance.

An individual is not eligible to serve or work in a position subject to the NSCHC requirements if the individual:

- Refuses to consent to a criminal history check.
- Makes a false statement in connection with a criminal history check.
- Is registered, or is required to be registered, on a state sex offender or the National Sex Offender Registry.
- Has been convicted of murder, [as defined in 18 U.S.C. 1111.](#)

Official Guidance

All AmeriCorps active Guidance is available on the agency's Guidance webpage:

<https://www.americorps.gov/about/agency-overview/official-guidance>. The contents of these documents do not have the force and effect of law and are not meant to bind the public in any way unless incorporated into a contract or grant agreement. These documents are intended only to provide clarity to the public regarding existing requirements under the law or agency policies.

Use of Material

To ensure materials generated with AmeriCorps funding are available to the public and readily accessible to grantees and non-grantees, GOCS and AmeriCorps reserve a royalty-free, nonexclusive, and irrevocable right to obtain, use, modify, reproduce, publish, or disseminate publications and materials produced under the award, including data, and to authorize others to do so, 2 CFR §200.315(b)

Reporting

Recipients are required to submit a variety of reports which are due at specific times during the life cycle of an award. All reports must be accurate, complete, and submitted on time.

Cost Reimbursement grantees are required to provide mid-year and end of year progress reports, monthly and semi-annual financial reports, and an internal or external evaluation report as required by AmeriCorps regulations at §2522.500-2522.540 and §2522.700-2522.740. A final financial report is due at the end of the grant.

Fixed Amount grantees are required to provide monthly financial reports, mid-year and end of year progress reports, and an internal or external evaluation report. A final financial report is due at the end of the grant. Fixed award recipient's final report must reconcile with total hours served on the roster report.

In addition, at the end of the award period, recipients must submit final financial (cost reimbursement grantees only) and progress reports that are cumulative over the entire award period and consistent with the close-out requirements. The final reports are due after the end of the period of performance.

Progress Report Data

If a grant is awarded, subrecipients are required to report high quality performance measure data derived from sound policies, processes, and practices. High quality data is generated from the program and service locations (if applicable) through ensuring the following standards are met:

- the data measures what it intends to measure
- the data reported is complete
- the data is collected in a consistent manner
- the data is reviewed for accuracy prior to submission
- the subrecipient takes steps to correct data errors

In addition to semi-annual reporting of progress toward the grant's approved performance measure outputs and outcomes, additional demographic and narrative data must be reported annually (as applicable), including the number of applicants for AmeriCorps positions and the number of volunteers recruited and/or supported by AmeriCorps members (both episodic and ongoing volunteers.) Failure to submit accurate, complete, and timely required reports may affect the recipient's ability to secure future GOCS and AmeriCorps funding.

AGENCY CONTACTS

Montana Governor's Office of Community Service
PO Box 200801
Helena, MT 59620
Program Officer: 406-444-5547 kristina.jordan@mt.gov
Fiscal Officer: 406-444-1809 keena.irby@mt.gov
General email: serve@mt.gov

OTHER INFORMATION

Technical Assistance

GOCS hosts technical assistance calls to answer questions about the funding opportunity and eGrants. GOCS strongly encourages all applicants to participate in these sessions. Call-in information for the technical assistance calls will be posted on GOCS' Grants webpage. A written technical assistance period is also available as described in the Notice Timeline.

[AmeriCorps hosts technical assistance information sessions. To register or watch webinar recordings, visit the AmeriCorps State and National grant opportunity webpage](#) and scroll down to the Technical Assistance sections.

In addition to consulting the Application Instructions, Mandatory Supplemental Information, and AmeriCorps regulations, applicants are encouraged to consult ServeMontana's website for updated materials during the RFP period.

[Resources applicants need to effectively manage their grant award, including eGrants instructions, terms and conditions, individual match waiver, pre-award requirements, financial reporting requirements, and training and technical assistance materials are found on the Manage Your Grant webpage.](#)

Re-Focusing Funding

AmeriCorps/GOCS reserve the right to refocus funding in the event of disaster or other compelling need for service.

IMPORTANT NOTICES

Public Burden Statement

Public reporting burden for collection of information under this Notice of Funding is estimated to average eighty (80) hours per submission, including reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing the application and reporting forms. AmeriCorps informs people who may respond to this Notice of Funding they are not required to respond unless the OMB control number and expiration date are current valid. (See [5 CFR 1320.5\(b\)\(2\)\(i\)](#).) This collection is approved under OMB Control #: 3045-0047, Application Instructions, State and National Competitive, New and Continuation, Expiration Date: September 30, 2023.

Privacy Act Statement

The Privacy Act of 1974 ([5 U.S.C. §552a](#)) requires that applicants are notified that the information requested under this Notice of Funding is collected pursuant to [42 U.S.C. §§12592](#) and 12615 of the [National and Community Service Act of 1990 as amended](#), and [42 U.S.C. §4953](#) of the Domestic Volunteer Service Act of 1973 as amended.

- Purposes and Uses - The information requested is collected for the purposes of reviewing grant applications and granting funding requests. Routine uses may include disclosure of the information to Federal, state, or local agencies pursuant to lawfully authorized requests. In some programs, the information may also be provided to Federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies to determine the existence of any prior criminal convictions. The information may also be provided to appropriate Federal agencies and contractors that have a need to know the information for the purpose of assisting the government to respond to a suspected or confirmed breach of the security or confidentiality or information maintained in this system of records, and the information disclosed is relevant and unnecessary for the assistance.
- Effects of Nondisclosure - The information requested is voluntary; however, to be a recipient of this grant program, disclosure of personal or sensitive information is required to receive federal benefits.

APPENDIX A: STAFF ASSESSMENT

**ServeMontana, the Governor’s Office of Community Service
Staff Assessment of Continuation Applications**

AmeriCorps State Grant Applications

Staff will complete the following assessment for all previously funded applicants.

- 1) Applicant:
- 2) Federal Request:
- 3) Total Match:
- 4) Match %:

	Current Grant Year	Application Request	Difference
Federal Funds			\$0
Cash Match			\$0
In-Kind Match			\$0
Total Match	\$0	\$0	\$0
Match %	#DIV/0!	0%	#DIV/0!
Project Cost	\$0	\$0	\$0
MSY	-		0.00
Cost per MSY	\$0	\$0	\$0

- 5) Areas of Assessment (50 points Max)
 - Budget, match, and cost per MSY (10 Points)
 - Compliance findings (10 Points)
 - Member enrollment rate and 8 day compliance (10 Points)
 - Member retention and 30 day compliance (10 Points)
 - Performance measure performance versus goals (10 Points)

Performance Measure statements	Current Grant Year		
	Target	Actual	Status

End of AmeriCorps State Grant Request for Proposal (RFP)